

THE REMARKABLE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

Luke 2:11

Treasuring Christ Church – Pastor Boyd Johnson

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INTRODUCTION

Remarkable

The story of Christmas has captured the imagination of people throughout the world (both believers in Christ and even those who reject Christ) ever since Christ's birth. Surely, one of the reasons is that the story is remarkable in many ways. It's remarkable for its simplicity. The story is so simple a child can understand its basic plot line and meaning.

At the same time, it's remarkable for its profundity. Who has learned all there is to know about God becoming man and the virgin birth? Who has fully understood God in the manger? The story is remarkable also for its cast of characters and their reactions to Jesus' birth.

There's:

Mary, a virgin, young woman from an obscure town, who may have been 12 or 13, brought into one of the greatest acts of God of all time.

Joseph, a man who valued righteousness and who, when he heard about Mary's pregnancy, at first thought he should quietly undo his betrothal to her so that he could marry a righteous woman and not bring any more shame to her.

The shepherds, who on an otherwise ordinary night with their sheep, were interrupted by a multitude of angels declaring that the Savior had been born.

The pagan, wise men (magi) from the east who followed a star and arrived sometime after Jesus' birth to worship him and bring gifts fit for a king.

The multitude of angels, including the one named angel in the story (Gabriel), who faithfully delivered the good news of great joy about Jesus' birth.

Herod, who was wicked and a mad-man and who felt threatened by the arrival of the king of Israel and sought to have him killed.

The chief priests and the scribes Herod assembled to hear from the wise men and who seemed largely indifferent to the wise men's belief that the Christ would be born.

Zechariah, Elizabeth and John the Baptist, who were related to Jesus through Mary and have their own remarkable birth story tied to Jesus'.

Simeon and Anna, older, faithful Jews who longed to see the Christ and worshipped when they heard the news, in contrast to the Jewish establishment.

Each one of these make fascinating study, especially as you observe how they responded to Jesus' birth story. But, of course, the most remarkable thing about the Christmas story is the one who was born. The other people provide wonderful color and context to the story and help us understand the true meaning of the story.

But the Christmas story itself isn't about all these other people, it is about the baby boy who was born to Mary in Bethlehem. So this Christmas morning, I wanted to spend a few moments with you meditating on the significance of Jesus' birth. And one way to do this is to by asking the question: what was heaven's perspective about the birth of Jesus?

Earth's perspective was varied:

- Mary treasured what she heard and pondered.
- The shepherds praised God.
- The wise men worshipped.
- Herod reacted with hatred.

But what was heaven's perspective? We know what heaven's perspective was because of the angels' proclamations about the birth of Christ. The angels proclamations to Mary and Joseph and Zechariah and the shepherds tell us of heaven's perspective. I want to take you to just one of heaven's announcements about the significance of Jesus' birth: Luke 2:11. Since we just read the Christmas story, I won't read the context again.

But recall that this is the moment when an angel of the Lord appeared at night to shepherds out in their field and announces the birth of Jesus. You could say that this angel is the first evangelist of the New Testament. The angel says in verse 10, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." "I bring. . .good news" is one word in the Greek. It's the same root word for the gospel. The angel was gospeling over the shepherds and proclaiming the worldwide gospel of great joy. Was there ever a time that heaven was more happy?

The angel gets to be the one to tell earth what heaven already knows—the child born in an out-of-the-way town would change the world and man's relationship with God. This gospel of great joy wasn't limited to the people of Israel, either. The boy born in Bethlehem was born for the world. He was (and now is) the Savior of the world. The good news the angel brings has universal relevance. Wherever there are people, the news of Jesus' birth is good news. Jesus is God's plan to fulfill what was promised to Abraham centuries before—that all the nations would be blessed through Abraham's line.

So this is a joyous occasion as the angel breaks into earth and announces Jesus' birth to the shepherds. The angel continued:

Luke 2:11: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

This is the Christmas story in one verse. The Christmas story is the story of God's Son, Jesus, coming into the world, humbling himself by being born in the likeness of men so that he would be the Savior of the world, even its Lord. And that's what the angel says in so few words. The angel packs this one sentence with truth. Here, the angel not only tells the shepherds of the *fact* of Jesus' birth but also hints at the *purpose* of Jesus coming. Jesus' purpose in coming is revealed in the titles that the angel gives to baby Jesus. The angel's pronouncement is unlike any other in the Bible. This verse is unique in that this is the only verse in the Bible where all three of these titles are given to Jesus in one place. You can go throughout the New Testament and find Jesus called Savior and called Christ and called Lord.

But this is the only verse where Jesus is called all three of those at one time. The angel is bursting with information about who this baby is to the shepherds. So briefly this Christmas morning, let's contemplate the reasons why Jesus was born according to this verse by examining the three titles given to Jesus.

The first reason Jesus came was to save.

I. JESUS CAME TO SAVE

The first title the angel gives to Jesus is Savior. That's what the name Jesus means: Yahweh saves. Jesus is the personal name given by the angel that appeared to Joseph.

Matthew 1:21: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

He will save his people from their sins. That's why Jesus was born. If we never sinned, the Second Person of the Trinity wouldn't have needed to be born. But we have sinned. Everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. So we needed a sacrifice for our sin. We needed an atonement for our sin. We needed our sin to be paid for. Jesus was born so that he could die in our place.

The writer of Hebrews says this:

Hebrews 2:17: "[H]e had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

And notice that the angel in our text in Luke says that "*unto you* is born this day. . ." Not simply the shepherds, but Jesus was born for all in the world. Jesus was born for you. He was born to take away your sins. We need only to believe in him to have our sins taken away and so be saved from the judgment of God. Jesus came to save.

Secondly. . .

II. JESUS CAME TO FULFILL

The second title the angel gives Jesus is "Christ." We probably don't feel the full weight of that title for Jesus as the Israelites did. They were the people who for generations were waiting for the promised one who would come and fulfill the promises spoken by the prophets. Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term, Messiah. At its root, the Hebrew term means Anointed One. He is God's anointed or chosen vessel to work on God's behalf in the kingdom.

One of the central themes in the Old Testament is the expectation of the coming Messiah. Those who were anointed of God in the Old Testament were either prophets or priests or kings doing the work of God in their respective offices. But never in the Old Testament is an anointed one of God all three—a prophet, a priest, *and* a king. But as the Christ, Jesus is all three. He isn't just *a* Messiah, another anointed one in a long line, but *the* Messiah, *the* Christ, *the* Anointed One. He is what no other man has ever been. He is at the same time:

God's highest prophet: God's highest spokesman and the one who gives the fullest revelation of God possible.

God's highest priest: Jesus intercedes for his people and acts as our mediator—especially as he dies on the cross to bridge the gap between God and man.

God's highest king: he is, as the book of Revelation says, the "King of kings" with none higher than he, none with more authority, none with a greater reign.

So Jesus fulfills all three offices: he is the final Prophet, Priest, and King. He fulfills the expectation of the coming Christ. So as Savior, Jesus came to save. As Christ, Jesus came to fulfill.

Lastly. . .

III. JESUS CAME TO RULE

The last title the angel gives in Luke 2:11 is "Lord." We understand that term. We know that Lord means ruler, someone with authority, one who is in a position of leadership and who requires our submission. Jesus is the sovereign ruler. The prophets told of one who would come as a ruler.

Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

"the government shall be upon his shoulder" means that this child born in a manger would rule the nations.

Micah 5:2: "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days."

The ruler from Bethlehem would be from eternity past.

The angel who came to Mary said in

Luke 1:31–33: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Jesus is the fulfillment of all these promises as our Lord.

Paul reflects on the birth, life, and death of Jesus in:

Philippians 2:6–11: "though [Jesus] was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to

the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

So Jesus came to be our Lord.

CONCLUSION

What should be our response to the remarkable Christmas story?

Because Jesus is our Savior, we should come to him in confession of our sins, gratitude for the sacrifice he made, and ongoing faith in him.

Because Jesus is our Christ, we should honor and worship him as our Prophet, our Priestly Mediator, and our King.

Because Jesus is our Lord, we should submit to him and follow him wherever he would lead.

These are fitting responses to the remarkable story of Christmas.